

# **United States Air Force** **ONLINE** **news**

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## NEWSBYTES

### AAFES check cashing policy

**DALLAS (AFPN)**—The Army and Air Force Exchange Service is lowering its two-party check-cashing limit from \$300 to \$100, beginning June 1.

This policy change is necessary to help curtail fraudulent check cashing schemes and to protect customers from the liability they incur when falling victim to cashing stolen, forged or insufficient fund checks, according to officials. Local installation commanders may set lower limits at their own discretion.

The new lower limit will not apply to certain "safe checks" such as those issued by the U.S. Treasury and state governments. AAFES encourages its customers to review the check cashing policy signs displayed at all of its facilities for complete details. It is important for customers who attempt to cash two-party checks in an AAFES facility, or any bank or credit union, to understand that they, not the individual who originally wrote the check, will be held financially responsible for the check if it is returned.

### U.S. forces join Moroccan paratroopers for exercise

**RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany (USAFENS)**—Nearly 140 Air Force airmen and 10 U.S. Army soldiers joined members of the Royal Moroccan army during a recent training exercise held in Morocco.

Operation Blue Sands 00-01, held April 9-21, focused on static line parachute employment and military freefall parachute training, using high-altitude, low-opening tactics, as well as day and night assault zone landings. The training exercises are held semiannually in Morocco.

Airmen participating in the exercise were from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, RAF Mildenhall, England, and the Kentucky Air National Guard.

## **READINESS CHALLENGE** **CE, Services, chaplains test combat skills**

By Tech. Sgt. Michael A. Ward  
 Air Force Civil Engineer  
 Support Agency  
 Public Affairs

**TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.**—Last April, hundreds of military members representing six countries were going through final preparations to battle for team and individual trophies at Readiness Challenge VII. The competition never happened as U.S. and Allied forces turned their attention to real-world battles in the Balkan region.

Now, Readiness Challenge is back. The biennial Air Force Civil Engineer, Services and Chaplain Service combat and contingency skills competition began here April 29 and ends May 5.

Lieutenant Col. Wayland Patterson, project officer for the competition, said Readiness Challenge is a great way to assess the ability of teams to set up and maintain support opera-

*Pictured here, Senior Airmen Turaeza Gebbia and Travis Yuen, both on the ACC team from Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, get out of the water after the final obstacle course event on April 30.*

*Photo by Technical Sgt. Scott Thompson*



tions under bare base, wartime field conditions, including setting up components of a self-sufficient camp with living quarters, work areas, water and food service. Events cover a broad

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## Web site creates virtual community

By Staff Sgt. Cynthia Miller  
 Headquarters United States Air Force

**WASHINGTON**—Job banks, chat rooms, video teleconferencing and telecommuting opportunities are four new features coming to the Air Force Crossroads web site, which unveiled a new look May 1.

The site, [www.afcrossroads.com](http://www.afcrossroads.com), pools web resources from across the Air Force and Department of Defense into a single location



<http://www.afcrossroads.com>

and provides a virtual community atmosphere where visitors can participate in bulletin board discussions, chat rooms, post resumes online or search

for information on a variety of topics.

Originally developed in 1997 to meet the growing need for family and community resource information, Crossroads underwent a redesign to update the site for changing family

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## Letters to the editor

U.S. Air Force Online News publishes letters based on their appeal to an Air Force-wide audience each week. Send your letter to the

U.S. Air Force Online

News staff by completing the online form at

<http://www.af.mil/newspaper/>

Due to the number of letters, not all letters can be published. Letters may be edited for grammar and length. Only letters accompanied by a valid name and email address will be considered.

## Kudos for job well done!

I had been following the story about the downed antenna at Boston's Logan Airport. I retired overseas, but am from that area. In the back of my mind I wondered if the FAA would request assistance from the Air Force. I was thrilled to see they had (April 26), and that the Air Force had accomplished this task. Please pass on to the crew two words for me: "Well Done"!

**Master Sgt. Kevin Burns**  
USAF, Retired

## Road rage not the answer

... regarding the road raging member of our military (Commentary, April 26) ... I too am ashamed of someone from our profession who conducts themselves in such a manner. ... I have had to readjust my attitude toward bad drivers; ... I only hope the individuals who were cut off by this person's driving were tolerant. Road rage is already a bad situation; jumping in with retaliation, even flipping the bird, makes it monumentally worse. ... our troops need to remember their ambassadorship both at home and abroad. ... Please drive carefully out there. We need all of you!

**Tech. Sgt. Carl V. Young**  
USAF, Retired

## Look no farther than AF

In response to all the letters on off duty time — I can't believe how "off base" some people are. One individual responded with something to the effect "what community service should we do in the desert?" Take care of your Air Force community — help in the chapel, start a chess club ... volunteer to help sort mail. And for those who wonder why we are "daring people to get out" — that is not the intent. Yes, we want retention to rise — but only with quality airmen who want this lifestyle. Community service is a privilege and should weigh in on your performance appraisal. It's a whole person concept — be part of the team.

**Maj. Chris Tancredi**  
Malmstrom AFB, Mont.

# Leaving the Air Force

## Not as easy as it seems

By retired  
Chief Master Sgt.  
Phil Penrod



I wanted to let you know that I have officially retired from Air Force life.

The first four months of retired life were some of the most difficult times I ever experienced.

It was not as easy as I thought it would be. However, being the general manager for a large distribution center of three furniture companies is a challenge that keeps me very busy. It was a mess when I started, but now things are turning around and looking pretty good. My boss, the CEO and owner of all three companies, is very pleased and even put another section under me recently.

I have instilled a lot of the values of the Air Force into the people that work for me now.

I would say the single most important thing I did to win them over was to show them I was a completely honest individual, and I would never put my integrity on the line. This seems to have impressed them, and they not only respect me for it, but also trust me.

As I look at the people who work for me now, and their lives and desires, I think of how fortunate our Air Force troops really are. Air Force troops have a lot of benefits they take for granted. Here's what I offer people who I hire:

■ Five paid sick days (after six months of employment).

■ Five paid vacation days after one year, two weeks after two years, and three weeks after eight years. Can't get more than that.

■ Medical and dental they pay for:  
Single: \$55 per month

Family: \$275 per month

■ Monthly bonuses if they meet all their objectives.

■ Six paid holidays per year. If they are not at work the day prior or the day after the holiday, they do not receive the holiday pay.

That's about all they get. Of course, the senior managers get a little more, but not much. Perhaps the thing I miss most is the 30 days paid vacation, all the holidays off, and the functions, dinners and professional organizations that united people.

We just don't have that in the civilian world. My folks punch the clock every day, and they work hard. They deserve better, but unfortunately, that's just the way it is. I dare not tell them how good I had it in the Air Force. They probably wouldn't believe me anyway.

The average airman in today's Air Force is taken care of very well. The Air Force is still a great career for people who want to become successful. I could go on and on, but I have to tell you that if I had to do it all over, I'd join the Air Force again — today.

Please pass on to the troops that one retired chief, now a senior executive in a large organization, would tell them — stay in the Air Force, make the best of it and enjoy your career. It's the best deal going! (Editor's note: The author is the former senior enlisted advisor at the 375<sup>th</sup> Air Wing, Cannon AFB, N.M.)



## READINESS CHALLENGE

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spectrum of wartime skills from force beddown to base recovery. Chaplain competitors are tested on their ability to serve the spiritual and counseling needs of military members in a contingency environment.

The competition features 12 U.S. teams representing each of the Air Force's major commands, two direct reporting units and the Air National Guard. They are joined by teams from Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway and Japan. This is the fourth competition for Canada, the second for the United Kingdom and the first for Norway and Japan. In addition to the competing foreign teams, military observers from at least four other nations are expected.

The competition brings more than 400 military competitors and hundreds of support staff and visitors here.

### U.S. teams

#### Major commands

- Air Combat Command – 366th Wing, Mountain Home AFB, Idaho
- Air Education and Training Command – 314th Airlift Wing, Little Rock AFB, Ark.
- Air Force Materiel Command – 75th Air Base Wing, Hill AFB, Utah
- Air Force Space Command – 90th Space Wing, F.E. Warren AFB, Wyo.
- Air Mobility Command – 60th Air Mobility Wing, Travis AFB, Calif.
- Pacific Air Forces – 3rd Wing, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska
- U.S. Air Forces in Europe – 48th Fighter Wing, RAF Lakenheath, England
- Air Force Special Operations Command – 16th Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Fla.
- Air Force Reserve Command – 927th Air Refueling Wing, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mich. (The Reserve team will also include members from the 910th Airlift Wing, Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio, and the 934th Airlift Wing, Minneapolis-St. Paul Air Reserve Station, Minn.)

#### Direct reporting units

- District of Columbia – 11th Wing, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Air Force Academy – 10th Air Base Wing, USAF Academy, Colo.
- Air National Guard – 134th Air Refueling Wing, McGhee Tyson ANG Base, Tenn.

### International teams

- Canada – 14 Airfield Engineering Squadron, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia
- United Kingdom – 48 Field Squadron (Air Support), Waterbeach, Cambridge
- Japan – Kouku-Shisetsutai (Air Civil Engineering), Tokyo
- Norway – Base Defense Group, Camp Kolsas

More information on Readiness Challenge, including the daily scoreboard, is available at [www.afcesa.af.mil](http://www.afcesa.af.mil).

## PHOENIX CONTROLLER 20

# FAA program yields first 2 hires

### WASHINGTON

The Federal Aviation Administration has hired its first two retired military air traffic controllers under a new FAA program developed jointly with the Defense Department.

The program, known within DOD as Phoenix Controller 20, kicked off in February and offers retired military ATCs the opportunity to apply for jobs with the FAA—an opportunity they have never had before.

The Air Force is eyeing the program for its retention value, with officials saying they hope the program will encourage more military controllers to stay in the service, which is currently experiencing a 65 percent overall qualified manning rate in the ATC career

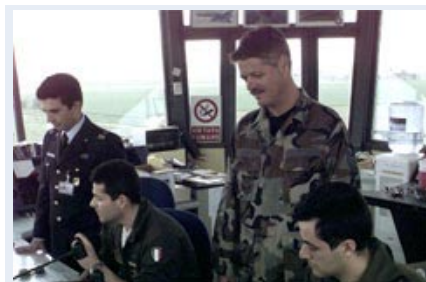


Photo by Tech. Sgt. Willis Northington

*Technical Sgt. James Holmes, an air traffic controller from Hurlburt Air Field, Fla., works with Italian counterparts at Cervia Air Base, Italy, during Operation Allied Force last year.*

field, vs. a desired 95 percent rate.

Primarily, the program aims to reduce the volume of military ATCs leaving the service after one or two enlistments because of age restrictions they face when seeking an FAA job.

The age limit is

31 for people to be hired for an air traffic controller position. The FAA's Employment of Retired Military Air Traffic Controllers Program lifts the age restriction specifically for retired military controllers, said program officials.

*This article is available in its entirety online.*

## YOUR MONEY

### Payday loans not the answer to financial woes

WASHINGTON — Outside the front gate neon signs advertise quick, easy cash. Inside the gate, newspaper ads offer advance check cashing services. It's mid-way between pay periods and Airman Smith is out of money, so for a \$15 fee, he takes out a two-week cash advance for \$100. Two weeks later, however, he's unable to repay the loan so, he extends it for two more weeks and another \$15.

Airman Smith is fictional, but the scenario is real enough. Service members feeling financially strapped between pay periods may be tempted to take out "payday" loans to help make ends meet. Air Force officials warn doing so can cause financial hardship in the long run.

"Payday loans have a downward spiral effect when people need money," said Master Sgt. Pete Floyd, a first sergeant at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C. "People may take these loans out intending to repay them immediately, but something will always happen to preclude them from paying. Or, paying leaves them short again, so they have to take out another loan."

*This article is available in its entirety online.*

### Cold war hero honored

#### BEALE AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. —

The legacy of Capt. Francis Gary Powers and the present-day importance of the U-2 program were celebrated here May 1.

Captain Powers, a U-2 pilot, was shot down on a reconnaissance mission over the former Soviet Union May 1, 1960, and was held prisoner for two years. This incident strained relations between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union and is widely regarded as one of the most important events in Cold War history.

On the 40th anniversary of Captain Powers' fateful mission, his son, Francis Gary Powers Jr., soared to altitudes greater than 70,000 feet in the back seat of a U-2ST piloted by Lt. Col. Bryan Anderson, commander of the 1st Reconnaissance Squadron.

The flight was followed by a ceremony in which the Powers family accepted the Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross, the Department of Defense Prisoner of War Medal and the National Defense Service Medal in the senior Powers' honor.

The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded to those who distinguished themselves in actual combat in support of operations by heroism or extraordinary achievement while engaged in an aerial flight.

*This article is available in its entirety online.*



## Team recovers downed flier's aircraft

**TUZLA AIR BASE, Bosnia and Herzegovina (USAFENS)** – Captain Scott O'Grady made world headlines when his F-16 fighter was shot down June 2, 1995 over Bosnia. Some five days later, a Marine search and rescue team recovered the then-Air Force officer and whisked him to safety. His aircraft was not so lucky.



*A de-mining team in Bosnia and Herzegovina discovered the F-16C piloted by former U.S. Air Force Capt. Scott O'Grady.*

Almost five years later, the fighter, which was struck by a Serb missile, has been found.

An operations officer walked into Maj. Lee Wheeler's office April 17, placed documents describing a recent discovery on the major's desk and asked, "What do you think of this?"

Major Wheeler, currently in Bosnia and Herzegovina supporting the international peacekeeping mission, was in for a surprise. Two days later, he was leading a team of 10 U.S. Army, Air Force and civilian officials up a

mountain to investigate the aircraft wreckage found days earlier by a hunter.

"I was in the right place at the right time," said the air liaison officer from the Illinois Air National Guard, of his selection as mission commander.

The trek began with an hour-long helicopter flight from Eagle Base here, head-

quarters for U.S.-led forces keeping the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. An hour's ride in an armored personnel carrier and a mile-long hike up a steep mountainside brought the team to the wreckage site located in a remote, densely wooded region of northwest Bosnia.

Speculation filled the air as the team of explosive ordnance experts, combat camera members and communications specialists arrived at the site.

*This article is available in its entirety online.*

### MORE MONEY

## TDY recruiters eligible for special duty pay

**WASHINGTON** – Former recruiters called back to the field on temporary duty will be authorized the same special duty assignment pay as their permanent duty counterparts, according to Air Force personnel officials.

The special duty pay, totaling \$375 monthly, will be effective beginning the first day of their recruiting duties, said Senior Master Sgt. Samuel Trevino, chief of enlisted skills management, Directorate of Personnel.

Deployed recruiters will be doing the same work as other recruiters in the field and are entitled to receive SDAP according to Air Force officials.

## There's more!

Go online to get the complete articles.

■ **No longer selective** The White House announced May 1 that the United States will discontinue selective availability of Global Positioning System signals available to the public. Selective availability is the intentional degradation of signals transmitted by Navstar GPS satellites, providing civilian users with an accuracy less than what's used by the military.

■ **AF captures 7 DOD environmental awards, honors service winners** The Air Force honored its 1999 Gen. Thomas D. White Environmental Award winners in a ceremony April 26.

## AF Crossroads

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and community priorities in 1998. The Air Force Community Action Information Board adopted the Crossroads web site as the Air Force's official family and community web site March 21.

Designed to support the mobile military lifestyle, Crossroads provides services and content for all members of the Air Force community including civilians, reserve and guard members, retirees, and the family members of each.

"Crossroads is a live site with information updated daily to ensure the accuracy of the information we provide," said Stefanie Myers, community programs assistant for the Air Force Family Matters Office.

The site is divided into 16 channels featuring a calendar of events, communication center, a resource center, and information centers on casualty and loss, Department of Defense installations, education, elder care, employment, family separation and readiness, finance, leisure, medical and dental, parenting and relocation.

According to Ms. Myers, the DOD installation channel, with its listing of 300 bases worldwide, is the most popular section on the site. "It provides an easy, one-step process to research DOD installations with a complete photo gallery of each installation and allows visitors to research information on local communities as well," she said.

Captain Walter Plush, commander, 28th Communications Squadron, Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., has used the site to get information on different bases, their support agencies, the climate, and for planning assignments, he said. "It's helped make my transitions much smoother."

For Krista Dupes, a military spouse at Bolling AFB in Washington D.C., the installation guide became a lesson in geography for her school-aged children.

*This article is available in its entirety online.*



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